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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the forty-seventh submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016) and paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system[1] and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 December 2017.

[1] Inputs provided from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat.

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II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points: December 2017

1. During the reporting period, military activity in parts of the country had a significant impact on the humanitarian situation, including further damage to civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, affecting the ability of United Nations agencies and their partners to deliver much-needed humanitarian support.

2. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate for the 393,000 people living in besieged eastern Ghutah, in Rif Dimashq, with daily shelling on several areas. While 29 urgent medical cases were evacuated on 30 December, more than 600 additional individuals inside eastern Ghutah continued to wait for medical evacuations.

3. During the reporting period, there were reports of shelling on Damascus, which resulted in civilian deaths and injuries as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure. People trapped in the besieged towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya continued to call for winter clothing and medicine to address urgent needs.

4. Hostilities between forces of the Government of Syria and non-State armed opposition groups intensified considerably in the northern countryside of Hama Governorate and in southern Idlib Governorate during the reporting period. This resulted in civilian deaths, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

5. Death and injury due to landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices continued to be reported with alarming frequency in Raqqah city. According to partners on the ground, more than 220 civilians have died or have been injured in blasts since the city was retaken from ISIL in October 2017.

6. In December, United Nations humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic, including more than 3 million who received food assistance through regular deliveries. Some 60,000 were reached through two United Nations humanitarian inter-agency cross-line convoys in hard-to-reach areas. None of the people besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic were reached in December through inter-agency convoys. More than 800,000 were reached through cross-border convoys.

7. The United Nations estimates that some 2.9 million people are living in hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic. This number includes 417,566 people living in nine besieged locations throughout the country.

3. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria held the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva between 28 November and 14 December 2017. The round was focused on the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), with particular emphasis on the constitutional process and United Nations-supervised elections.

4. The Special Envoy continued diplomatic engagement in Washington, D.C., Moscow and Astana to maintain the momentum in support of United Nations-led intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. On 22 December in Astana, the guarantors of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic of

4 May, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey, agreed on two documents: an agreement to form a working group on the release of detainees/abductees, the handover of bodies and the identification of missing persons; and a joint statement on humanitarian mine action. The Astana guarantors also issued a joint statement that expressed support for the convening of a Syrian national dialogue congress in Sochi, Russian Federation, describing it as an initiative to complement United Nations intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

5. During the reporting period, military activity in parts of the country had a significant impact on the humanitarian situation, causing further damage to civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools and affecting the ability of United Nations agencies and their partners to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance. At the same time, in areas where local agreements had been reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups, relative calm was reported. Military activities, including air strikes, continued in Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Idlib, Hama, Rif Dimashq and other governorates.

6. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate for the estimated 393,000 people living in besieged eastern Ghutah, in Rif Dimashq. Daily shelling on several areas of eastern Ghutah, including Harasta, Nashabiyah, Duma, Ayn Tarma, Irbin, Zamalka, Saqba, Misraba and Bayt Nayim, resulted in civilian deaths and internal displacement within the besieged area. Schools were closed in eastern Ghutah as a result of the level of the hostilities. The prices for basic goods decreased owing to sporadic commercial access to the area, but remained some 30 times higher than in neighbouring Damascus city, far beyond the purchasing power of most residents of eastern Ghutah. The humanitarian situation inside the besieged enclave was further compounded by the inability of United Nations humanitarian convoys to reach the besieged area during the month. Residential neighbourhoods of Damascus city were also reportedly attacked from eastern Ghutah during the reporting period, resulting in death, injury and material damage.

7. From 26 to 28 December, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross evacuated 29 urgent medical cases from eastern Ghutah, together with 56 family members. Evacuees were taken to hospitals in Damascus for treatment. Under an agreement reportedly reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Army of Islam, the latter was to release captives. The United Nations was not party to the agreement or the negotiations. While the United Nations takes note of the medical evacuation of 29 cases, hundreds of other individuals inside eastern Ghutah continue to wait for their medical evacuations. Furthermore, some 18 people — including 4 children — are reported to have died without receiving required medical care over the past two months.

8. The besieged enclave of Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq, including the towns of Bayt Jinn, Mazra'at Bayt Jinn and Mughr al-Mir, has an estimated population of 3,646. In late December, following a period of prolonged siege and intensified military attacks, including air strikes, a local agreement was reached between the non-State armed opposition groups and the Syrian authorities in the area. On 30 December, 10 buses left the area, carrying 270 fighters and civilians, for Dar'a and Idlib Governorates. The United Nations was not a party to the agreement or the negotiations leading up to it.

Figure I
Key dates in December 2017

26-28 December
Evacuation of 29 medical cases from eastern Ghutah
30 December
Reported attack on INGO medical warehouse in Idlib Governorate
30 December
Evacuation of fighters and their families from the Bayt Jinn enclave

Abbreviation: INGO, international non-governmental organization.

9. Hostilities between forces of the Government of Syria and non-State armed opposition groups intensified considerably in the north-eastern countryside of Hama Governorate, the southern and south-eastern countryside of Idlib Governorate, and the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, resulting in civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, as well as large-scale displacement. From 1 November to 24 December, a total of 60,310 people were reportedly displaced from Si'in, Uqayribat and Hamra' Districts, in northern Hama, as well as Tamani'ah and Sanjar Districts, in southern Idlib. At least 22 sites for internally displaced persons and more than 6,000 residences were reported to have been abandoned. Displacement continued to increase towards the end of the reporting period. Many of those forced to flee had already been displaced. Of the 1.7 million people in need in Idlib Governorate, more than 1 million had been internally displaced before the recent escalation in violence.

10. During the reporting period, an additional 14,000 civilians returned to Raqqah city, where some 34,000 civilians were reported to have returned in previous months. Exact numbers remain difficult to verify, as some people return to Raqqah merely to check on their houses and subsequently leave, while others stay. Returns are also taking place to neighbourhoods that constituted the last stronghold of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These houses are particularly heavily mined and riddled with deadly booby traps. Deaths and injuries due to explosions continue to be reported at alarming frequency; trauma cases have nearly doubled in recent months. According to partners on the ground, more than 220 civilians have died or have been injured in blasts since Raqqah city was retaken from ISIL in October 2017. Each week, between 30 and 50 civilians continue to arrive at international non-governmental organization trauma stabilization points in Raqqah city, in need of trauma care. Demining activities are reportedly progressing slowly, owing in part to the large amount of destruction and the complexity of some of the devices left behind by ISIL. Humanitarian agencies therefore continue to emphasize that, owing to the high prevalence of landmines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war, Raqqah city is not safe for civilian returns.

11. In addition to the threat posed by unexploded ordnance, up to 80 per cent of all buildings in Raqqah city are severely damaged and at risk of collapse. The Raqqah Civil Council has conducted cleaning and rubble removal campaigns in many neighbourhoods; however, the level of destruction means that such work will take some time. Unconfirmed reports have been received that dead bodies remain under the rubble. Returnees also reportedly face additional challenges in view of a shortage of basic necessities and services. For example, water through the network remains unavailable in most of the city's neighbourhoods, and small-scale water-trucking

services provided by local authorities fall short of meeting current needs. Electricity is available in a few neighbourhoods and only through communal generators, as the electrical network requires extensive repairs. The availability of health services in the city remains very limited, with only a few health clinics currently operational.

12. Fighting between ISIL and forces of the Government of Syria in southern rural Dayr al-Zawr Governorate continued along the western bank of the Euphrates River in December. An estimated 229,700 people within Dayr al-Zawr were displaced between July and mid-December, with more than 60,000 currently displaced in camps located in Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. At the same time, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reportedly continued to advance along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River. The ongoing military operations reportedly continued to lead to civilian deaths and injuries. The threat of explosive ordnance to civilians was also of major concern in Dayr al-Zawr, particularly to those returning to their areas of origin following the expulsion of ISIL.

13. The Department of Defense of the United States of America publicly reported that in December, the United States-led coalition had carried out 177 strikes against ISIL targets in Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah and Homs Governorates. More than 95 per cent of those were reported to have been near Albu Kamal, in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. In addition, the coalition publicly reported that it had conducted air strikes in the middle Euphrates River Valley region on 1 December, as well as operations with coalition-partner forces near Tanf on 13 December and in the Hamad desert on 23 December.

14. On 7 December, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation publicly reported on support operations carried out during the previous week in Albu Kamal and on the western shore of the Euphrates River, as well as joint operations carried out on 3 December on the eastern shore of the Euphrates, to eradicate ISIL and re-establish government control of the Syrian/Iraqi border. On 11 December, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, ordered the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. The Ministry of Defence of the Syrian Arab Republic publicly reported that government forces and their allies had conducted operations against the Nusrah Front on 10 December in Hama Governorate and on 6, 11 and 14 December in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, retaking many towns and villages and confiscating weapons and improvised explosive devices left behind by ISIL.

Protection

16. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure throughout the month. Explosive weapons continue to be fired into populated areas, indiscriminately killing and injuring civilians, destroying and damaging vital infrastructure and leaving communities littered with explosive remnants of war that continue to kill and injure civilians and impede humanitarian access. The large number of civilian casualties and the scale of civilian destruction remain a strong indication that violations of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and of the resulting prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks, are continuing. Children are particularly affected by the fighting.

17. Fighting continued to affect civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),

civilian casualties occurred in various governorates (see annex), in possible violation of international humanitarian law. OHCHR has documented alleged incidents perpetrated by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies, and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

18. Despite the call made to the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22 to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remains limited, as the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has not granted access to the country.

19. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. In a note verbale received on 8 January, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva and specialized institutions in Switzerland provided OHCHR with a list of reported victims and injured civilians between 22 November and 21 December in the governorates of Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Suwayda', Homs, Hama, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah and Qunaytirah. A total of 37 civilians, including 9 children, were reported to have been killed, while 128 people, including 40 children, were reported to have been injured. The casualties reportedly had resulted from mortars and improvised explosive devices.

20. The United Nations and its health partners received reports of 16 attacks that had affected health-care facilities and personnel in December. Six attacks were reported in the eastern Ghutah region of Rif Dimashq, comprising four attacks on primary health centres and two on health workers. Six attacks were reported in Idlib, comprising attacks on two hospitals, one medical warehouse (in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man) and three primary health centres (in Sinjar, Khan Shaykhun and Dana subdistricts). In Homs, one paramedic was reportedly killed; in Hama, three hospitals in Kafr Zayta were reportedly attacked; and in Dar'a, one hospital was reportedly attacked.

21. Educational facilities also continued to suffer the impact of the fighting. One incident occurred on 28 December, when helicopters dropped barrel bombs on a school complex east of Babulin village, Idlib Governorate, partially destroying the school buildings. Another incident took place on 18 December, when a mortar shell landed in a government-owned school during the afternoon shift of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Dar'a city. Five UNRWA students were slightly injured, and the school was evacuated. On 3 December, air strikes near the Sanabel al-Fastat School, in Hamuriyah town, Rif Dimashq, were reported to have rendered the school inoperable and caused civilian casualties. On 4 December, air strikes near a school in Samiriyah village, in the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, reportedly injured a female teacher and damaged the school building. Also on 4 December, air strikes near the Umm al-Amad Primary School, in Umm al-Amad village, in the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, were reported to have partially damaged the school building. On 7 December, several schools in the western countryside of Dar'a were reportedly vandalized by ISIL affiliate the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, with documents and facilities set on fire. Ten school personnel (teachers and assistants) were reportedly also abducted by the group and brought to Ma'arbah, in the Yarmuk Basin area. On 7 December, air strikes on southern rural Aleppo Governorate reportedly damaged several schools in the villages of Hanutah, Hamidiyah and Umm al-Amad. The schools were rendered inoperable. On 16 December, air strikes on Tall al-Daman

village, in southern rural Aleppo, reportedly hit the school in the village, causing material damage. On 17 December, a shell reportedly landed on the Asa'd Akil School, in the Halab al-Jadidah neighbourhood of Aleppo city, injuring two school staff and several students, in addition to causing material damage.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points: humanitarian access

1. In December, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Regular programming reached many people in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 3 million who received food assistance through 1,500 deliveries.

2. In December, two humanitarian inter-agency cross-line convoys delivered lifesaving assistance to 60,000 people in the hard-to-reach locations of Harbinafsih, in Hama Governorate, and Hulah, in Homs Governorate. Those deliveries were delayed, following a reduction in the agreed number of beneficiaries by one third compared with what initially had been approved under the access plan for October-December. No inter-agency cross-line convoys to any of the besieged locations were authorized during the month of December.

3. Cross-border assistance remains a vital part of the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. Since the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 2165 (2014) in July 2014, assistance has been delivered from Turkey to millions of Syrians in various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Hama Governorates, and from Jordan to Dar'a, Qunaytirah and Suwayda' Governorates. In December, some 653 trucks in 28 convoys delivered lifesaving assistance to more than 800,000 people in need in northern and southern areas of the Syrian Arab Republic. Although access impediments imposed by armed actors and local authorities increased in the north-western part of the country, assistance continued at levels similar to those in the past.

4. The Syrian authorities continued the removal and delisting of medical supplies from inter-agency cross-line convoys, with supplies sufficient for more than 5,800 treatments either removed from convoys or not allowed to be loaded in December (see table 2). This brought the total number of medical items removed or not allowed to be loaded to more than 645,000 since the beginning of the year.

5. The United Nations estimates that, as of December 2017, some 2.9 million people in total were living in hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic (compared with 2.98 million in October 2017). That number included 417,566 people (compared with 419,920 in October 2017) living in nine besieged locations throughout the country and 2.49 million people living in hard-to-reach areas. Qabun, in Damascus Governorate, has been removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations. Ninety-five per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Two per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by non-State armed opposition groups, and 3 per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups.

22. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need remained extremely challenging in many areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines, administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed on the

movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict. In particular, access for the United Nations and its partners to those people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained a critical concern.

23. The United Nations estimates that, as of December 2017, approximately 417,566 people (compared with 419,920 in October 2017) were living in nine areas under siege. Qabun, with a population of 2,500, in Damascus Governorate, has been removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations, as the movement of civilians has improved and commerce has been restored to a certain degree. An area is considered by the United Nations to be besieged when it is surrounded by armed actors, with the sustained effect that civilians, the sick and the wounded cannot regularly exit and humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter. Of the nine besieged locations nationwide in the Syrian Arab Republic, six areas (accounting for 95 per cent of the total besieged population) are besieged by government forces, one area (3 per cent of the total besieged population) by both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups and two areas (2 per cent of the total besieged population) by non-State armed opposition groups. In addition to those in besieged locations, it is estimated that some 2.49 million people are living in hard-to-reach locations. While that figure represents a decrease compared with the previous estimate of 2.56 million, mainly as a result of access improvements in formerly ISIL-held Raqqah Governorate, parts of south-western Aleppo Governorate have now been designated as hard to reach, owing to access constraints resulting from an intensification of the hostilities between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups.

Table 1
Besieged locations, December 2017

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Damascus	Yarmuk	12 520	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Fu'ah	5 900	Non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Kafraya	2 200	Non-State armed opposition groups
Rif Dimashq/ Damascus	Irbin and surrounding area (Irbin, Zamalka and Jawbar)	49 300	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Harasta area (Harasta, Mudayra and Misraba)	56 535	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Duma area (Duma, Shaffuniyah and Hawsh al-Dawahirah)	150 100	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Kafr Batna area (Kafr Batna, Saqba, Ayn Tarma, Hammurah, Jisrayn, Aftris, Hazzah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Bayt Siwa and Muhammadiyah)	125 600	Government of the Syrian Republic
Rif Dimashq	Nashabiyah area (Nashabiyah, Bayt Nayim, Salihiyah, Utaya and Hazrama)	11 765	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Bayt Jinn	3 646	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Total		**417 566**	

24. The United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for October and November was further extended until December. Under the plan, access to 33 locations in besieged and hard-to-reach areas was requested, with the objective of reaching a total of 1,206,000 people. Inter-agency convoys are prepared for areas with multisectoral needs where access is limited, to ensure that United Nations support is needs-based. In December, only two inter-agency convoys could be dispatched, reaching some 60,000 people in need in two hard-to-reach locations (see table 2 for a list of inter-agency convoys deployed in December). No convoys were authorized for deployment to besieged locations. The total number of people reached under the October-December plan was 398,950, or 33 per cent of the total number of people to whom access had originally been requested under the plan. This number does not include convoys carrying supplies delivered by other humanitarian actors.

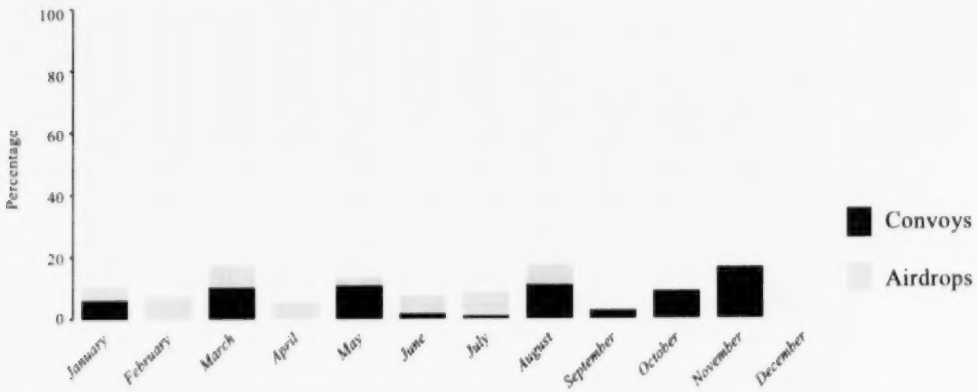
Table 2
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, December 2017

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Number of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
14 December	Hulah	71 000	50 000	Multisectoral
14 December	Harbinafsih	18 000	10 000	Multisectoral

25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations throughout the country during the reporting period. Single-agency deliveries are undertaken in areas where access is less challenging. In December, the World Food Programme submitted 1,501 official requests to the authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations throughout the country, of which 1,500 were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees submitted 60 facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, of which 58 were approved and 2 were rejected, with security concerns cited as the reason. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to undertake needs assessments and to provide support (including medical, educational, psychosocial and protection services) in besieged and hard-to-reach locations, under challenging circumstances, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Figure II

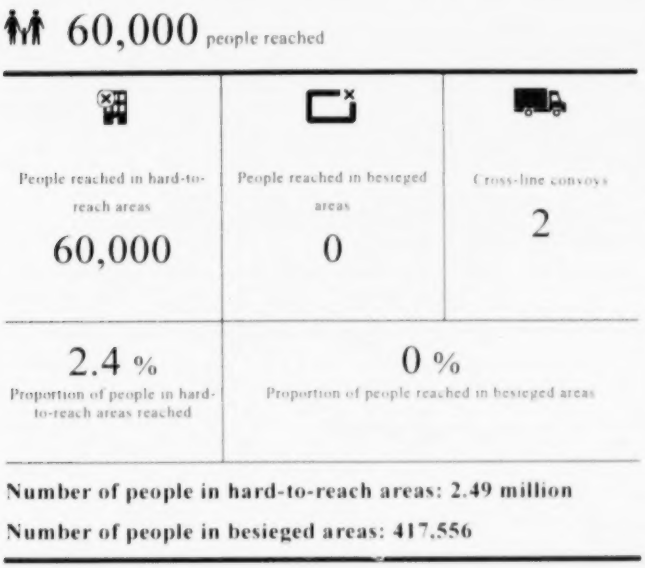
United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations: percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas, 2017



26. Humanitarian access continues to face restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict in besieged and hard-to-reach locations. On average in 2017, only 27 per cent of beneficiaries scheduled for assistance under specific requests were reached through inter-agency cross-line convoys each month. Bureaucratic impediments, such as the non-issuance of facilitation letters by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, continue to be a significant factor in these delays or non-deliveries, despite the creation of a tripartite coordination mechanism to address such problems. The mechanism met once during the reporting period, on 12 December, to discuss issues related to the deployment of humanitarian convoys, including to besieged eastern Ghutah, which remained inaccessible to the United Nations in December.

27. The United Nations and its partners continue to provide support to those who have been displaced by fighting in and around Raqqah as part of a coordinated response in the Syrian Arab Republic. United Nations agencies, through regular programming, along with humanitarian partners, have continued to provide multisectoral assistance to 420,000 people in need each month in Raqqah, Hasakah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates.

Figure III
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, December 2017



28. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for more than 5,800 treatments were rejected or removed from convoys in December by the Syrian authorities, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Details regarding the treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 3. Additional medical supplies were scheduled to be delivered as part of the inter-agency convoy plan; however, only two inter-agency convoys were able to proceed in December. Since the beginning of 2017, WHO has submitted 11 single-agency requests to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to gain access to 14 locations in six governorates. The Government approved nine requests, and one was rejected. One request remains pending.

Table 3
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys, December 2017

Location	*Number of treatments*	*Types of supplies*
Harbinafsih	5 110	Ketamine hydrochloride; atracurium besylate; miconazole nitrate; dobutamine hydrochloride; oxytocin injections 10 IU; syringe 5 ml disposable
Hulah	690	Thoracic drain bottles 700 ml; ketamine hydrochloride; atracurium besylate; beclomethasone dipropionate; dobutamine hydrochloride; oxytocin injections 10 IU

Humanitarian response

29. In December, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all available access modalities, including: (a) regular programming from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines;

(b) cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and (c) cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided from Jordan and Turkey to those in need (see table 4). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, non-governmental organizations continued to deliver lifesaving assistance to people in need. The Government continues to provide services both in areas under its control and in many areas beyond its control. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continue to provide services where possible.

Table 4
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, December 2017

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	20 000
International Organization for Migration	195 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 700 000
United Nations Children's Fund	>4 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	91 607
United Nations Population Fund	500 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	400 000
World Food Programme	>3 000 000
World Health Organization	1 890 000

30. During the reporting period, cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan into the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure IV). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

31. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 714 cross-border consignments, with more than 18,154 trucks (12,536 by way of Bab al-Hawa and 1,821 by way of Bab al-Salam, from Turkey; and 3,797 by way of Ramtha, from Jordan). The United Nations cross-border operations complement the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

32. In December, the United Nations and its implementing partners delivered food assistance for more than 520,000 people through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan. Moreover, the United Nations conducted health and medical deliveries, providing more than 630,000 treatments, through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) improved water quality and sanitation for 73,000 people through the repair and rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems and the distribution of hygiene kits, jerry cans and water purification tablets. In addition, UNICEF screened 25,783 children and pregnant and lactating women for acute malnutrition. Of the children screened, 197 were treated for severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF also enrolled 4,514 children, ranging from 5 to 17 years of age, in formal education. In

addition, 428 children between the ages of 5 and 19 were enrolled in non-formal education. In the southern governorates of Dar'a and Qunaytirah, more than 473,000 people benefited from improved access to clean water through maintenance operations with respect to water and sanitation systems. Of those people, 73,684 were reached with interventions under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) initiative, such as household water treatment, water vouchers and the rehabilitation and repair of sanitation facilities and water systems. Humanitarian partners also continued to provide nutrition services to more than 7,323 people in 10 communities in Dar'a Governorate and in 9 communities in Qunaytirah Governorate. A total of 3,067 children under the age of 5 were screened for acute malnutrition. Of the children screened, 89 were identified as suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and 17 as suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Those identified and diagnosed were treated through therapeutic and supplementary nutrition programmes at six health centres and one mobile clinic. In addition, 889 pregnant and lactating women were screened for acute malnutrition, of whom 117 received the necessary treatment. Moreover, during the reporting period cross-border oral polio vaccine campaign activities in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama and Homs Governorates were wrapped up. By the end of December, an additional 167,338 children under the age of 5 had been vaccinated, out of a total of 641,967 children targeted (559,695 children were vaccinated in November). The United Nations Population Fund reached some 410,035 people with support in terms of reproductive health, efforts to address gender-based violence, and youth empowerment.

33. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations during the reporting period, monitoring 653 trucks used in 28 consignments by seven United Nations entities, confirming the humanitarian nature of the goods on each truck and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The United Nations provides 48-hour notice to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for all shipments. United Nations partners ensure that, once in the country, shipments arrive at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensure independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and also monitor the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

Figure IV

Number of targeted beneficiaries by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, December 2017

(Thousands)

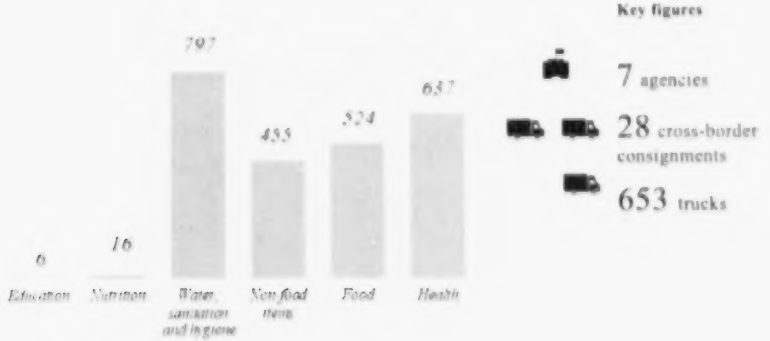


Table 5

Number of targeted beneficiaries through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, December 2017

Governorate	District	Education	Food	Health	Non-food items	Nutrition	Water, sanitation and hygiene
Aleppo	Bab	–	–	–	11 000	–	5 500
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	100 160	36 965	69 332	2 625	1 000
Aleppo	Jarabulus	–	–	–	28 421	–	5 500
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	38 270	1 960	24 650	–	12 000
Dar'a	Sanamayn	–	–	–	–	–	38 000
Dar'a	Dar'a	2 400	118	63 132	22 325	1 560	440 168
Dar'a	Izra'	–	815	–	16 495	781	206 199
Hama	Suqaylibiyah	–	5 000	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	65 875	3 528	20 425	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	22 500	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Harim	–	239 725	35 485	7 218	10 407	9 056
Idlib	Idlib	–	42 500	2 352	129 456	–	–
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	9 240	–	99 657	–	6 750
Qunaytirah	Fiq	–	–	52 400	–	–	6 000
Qunaytirah	Qunaytirah	3 600	385	442 125	26 560	780	67 400

34. Throughout December, the Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian financing

35. As at 31 December, the humanitarian response plan for the Syrian Arab Republic was 51 per cent funded, with $1.7 billion of the requested $3.35 billion received under the plan.

Figure V
Humanitarian response plan funding, 30 December 2017

(Millions of United States dollars)

Visas and registrations

36. A total of 41 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in December. Of those, 7 were approved, 2 were denied and 32 remain pending. Of the 24 visa applications submitted in October and November, 22 were approved in December and 2 were denied. A total of 52 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in December, of which 34 were approved, 1 was denied and 17 remain pending. An additional 53 requests for visa renewals submitted in November were approved in December. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, despite formal requests.

37. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to operate in the country. Some 220 national non-governmental organizations are authorized by the Syrian Arab Republic to operate through 315 branches countrywide.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

38. Programmes of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are implemented in areas affected by frequent clashes among belligerents, air strikes, regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetrical attacks.

39. Since the start of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations or agencies of the United Nations system, of whom 18 were UNRWA staff members, 66 were staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 were staff members and volunteers

of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are also reported to have been killed.

40. A total of 27 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 26 UNRWA staff members) are being detained or are missing.

III. Observations

41. The extent to which the situation on the ground in the Syrian Arab Republic remains volatile is of great concern, particularly as civilians continue to bear the brunt of ongoing military activity, heavy fighting, air strikes and besiegement. While some progress was made in Astana in December, as the ceasefire guarantors — Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey — agreed to establish a working group on detainees/abductees and issued a joint statement on humanitarian mine action, tangible results are needed to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people.

42. Given the sustained high level of need amid the considerable constraints on humanitarian access within the country, it is critical that the United Nations reach all in need through the most direct routes. As I have stated previously, all modalities of the delivery of assistance are essential to the efficient and effective provision of humanitarian assistance and to ensuring a needs-based response. In this regard, I welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2393 (2017), in which the Council extended for another year the authorization of the use by United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners of routes across conflict lines and across borders to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic by the most direct routes. Through the adoption of resolution 2393 (2017), the Council has placed the people and their humanitarian needs at the centre; the resolution will ease the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people and will save lives.

43. Cross-border deliveries are, however, only one of the methods of delivery used by the United Nations and its partners. While continued cross-border efforts are crucial, improvements are urgently required in cross-line access. Only two United Nations inter-agency cross-line convoys were deployed in December; no convoy reached besieged areas. Cross-line access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas is critical, including to besieged eastern Ghutah, where 94 per cent of the total besieged population currently resides.

44. I note the medical evacuations of 29 patients from eastern Ghutah, reportedly as part of an agreement that includes the release of prisoners by non-State armed opposition groups. Under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict shall facilitate measures for the sick and wounded to be evacuated to a location where they can be cared for. International humanitarian law makes it clear that medical evacuations are an obligation based on medical need alone. An additional 600 people remain in need of urgent medical evacuation in eastern Ghutah; 18 have already died while waiting to be evacuated. I call on all Member States with influence over the parties to the conflict to do their utmost for the medical evacuations to take place before more people die. At the same time, medicine, food and other humanitarian assistance must be allowed into eastern Ghutah without delay to alleviate the situation for those who remain trapped inside the besieged enclave.

45. Accountability for serious violations is a requirement under international law and central to achieving sustainable peace. I reiterate my call for the situation in the

Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, Member States, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

46. The failure to make further progress at the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva was a missed opportunity. Ending the immense suffering of the Syrian people remains the impetus driving my Special Envoy to resume intra-Syrian talks in Vienna in January. Substantive progress at this ninth round of talks will be crucial in this regard. I welcome all the efforts made by Member States to end hostilities. I continue to support my Special Envoy and the United Nations-led Geneva process as the only process mandated by the Security Council to bring a conclusion to this war.

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2017*

Damascus and Rif Dimashq Governorates

- On 2 December, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Irbin and reportedly killed six male civilians.
- On 3 December, air strikes hit a residential area in Irbin, allegedly killing three civilians, including two children, and injuring at least five other civilians, one of them a woman.
- On 3 December, six civilians, including a man and his son, were reportedly killed by an air strike that hit opposition-controlled western Hamuriyah. At around 11.50, an air strike hit a shopping area in Hamuriyah, while another strike damaged a nearby building, allegedly killing nine civilians, including three boys and a girl, and wounding a male civilian, who reportedly died the following day.
- On 4 December, several ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the Government-controlled Abbasiyin neighbourhood of Damascus and reportedly caused the deaths of two male civilians.
- On 6 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Irbin, damaging a residential building and reportedly killing a boy and a girl and injuring their mother.
- On 13 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area of opposition-controlled Bayt Siwa and allegedly killed two civilians, including a boy, and injured an unknown number of other civilians.
- On 16 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Duma, reportedly killing three civilians, including two women and a child.
- On 19 December, ground-based strikes hit Al-Idshaaria Street in the residential area of Zablatani, in eastern Damascus, allegedly resulting in the death of three civilians, including a woman and a 14-year-old boy, and wounding six civilians, including two women and a 15-year-old boy.
- On 21 December, a farmer was reportedly shot and killed in Kafr Batna as he was working on his land in the vicinity of Mulayhah.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground and the incidents that occurred during the month that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been able to corroborate, relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Ceasefire of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

Dar'a Governorate

- On 1 December, a car travelling on a road in the vicinity of opposition-controlled Ibta' hit an improvised explosive device, which reportedly killed a civilian woman and injured two other civilians - her brother and a child.
- On 7 December, the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army allegedly publicly executed two male civilians in Saham al-Jawlan and another male civilian in Tasil after the three had been "sentenced" by a "court" run by the group, for allegedly providing support to the Free Syrian Army.
- On 11 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the vicinity of the Omari mosque in Dar'a al-Balad, reportedly killing a girl and injuring three male civilians.
- On 17 December, ground-based strikes hit a road in the vicinity of Kafr Shams, allegedly killing two civilians as their motorbike exploded after being hit by shrapnel.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 11 December, Turkish-backed forces of Operation Euphrates Shield reportedly publicly executed four alleged ISIL members at a square in the centre of Jarabulus city, in north-eastern Aleppo Governorate. The four members were accused of killing civilians in then-ISIL-controlled Jarabulus in 2014. Euphrates Shield forces had recaptured the city from ISIL in August 2016.
- On 12 December, air strikes hit the Levant Liberation Organization-controlled village of Ramla, in Khanasir District, southern Aleppo Governorate, and allegedly injured 11 civilians, 3 of whom sustained serious injuries. Those injured were reportedly internally displaced persons who were later transferred to a hospital in Idlib Governorate owing to the lack of medical facilities in southern Aleppo.
- On 17 December, ground-based strikes hit a playground at a secondary school in the government-controlled New Aleppo neighbourhood of Aleppo city, allegedly injuring one girl and two female teachers.

Idlib and Hama Governorates

- On 8 December, air strikes hit residential areas in Zurzur village, south-eastern Idlib Governorate, and reportedly killed seven civilians from the same family — three women and four children — and injured at least four others.
- On 17 December, several air strikes hit residential areas in a southern neighbourhood of Khan Shaykhun, as well as the centre of the city, where the main market was also hit. The air strikes on residential areas in the centre of Khan Shaykhun allegedly resulted in the killing of 10 civilians: 6 women, 3 girls and a boy. A mother and her three children were among the victims. Many of the victims showed signs of severe burns. The air strikes that hit the main market of Khan Shaykhun reportedly wounded five civilians, including two women and a boy.
- On 19 December, air strikes hit residential areas of Tah town, in southern Idlib Governorate, reportedly killing a girl.

- On 20 December, air strikes hit residential areas in the centre of Ma'arr Shurin town, in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, and allegedly killed 18 civilians, including 7 women and at least 5 children, many of them from the same family. One of the families had been displaced from northern Hama Governorate.

Homs Governorate

- On 5 December, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in a mini-bus exploded in Ahram Street in the government-controlled city of Homs, reportedly killing 10 civilians.
- On 19 December, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the village of Si'in, east of opposition-controlled Talbisah, allegedly killing a boy.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 1 December, the Baghuz, Buq'an and Jala' water crossings were hit by air strikes, which reportedly killed two male civilians at Baghuz and Buq'an and a girl at Jala'. The crossings remain under ISIL control.
- On 6 December, air strikes hit the town of Jurdi, in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, and allegedly killed 17 civilians, including 2 women and 4 children. The town, which had previously been under ISIL control, was reportedly hit after the fighters had fled and SDF had captured the area.
- On 20 December, a car bomb detonated close to an SDF-controlled checkpoint at the Attal roundabout near Shahil city, in the eastern part of the governorate, and allegedly killed nine civilians, including four children.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 3 December, six male civilians checking their houses in Raqqah city were reportedly killed when unexploded ordnance in their homes detonated.
- On 7 December, seven civilians, including two boys, were allegedly killed by unexploded ordnance detonating in Raqqah city.
- On 17 December, a boy was allegedly killed when unexploded ordnance detonated near him as he was walking in Ghanim al-Ali village, in eastern Raqqah Governorate.

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